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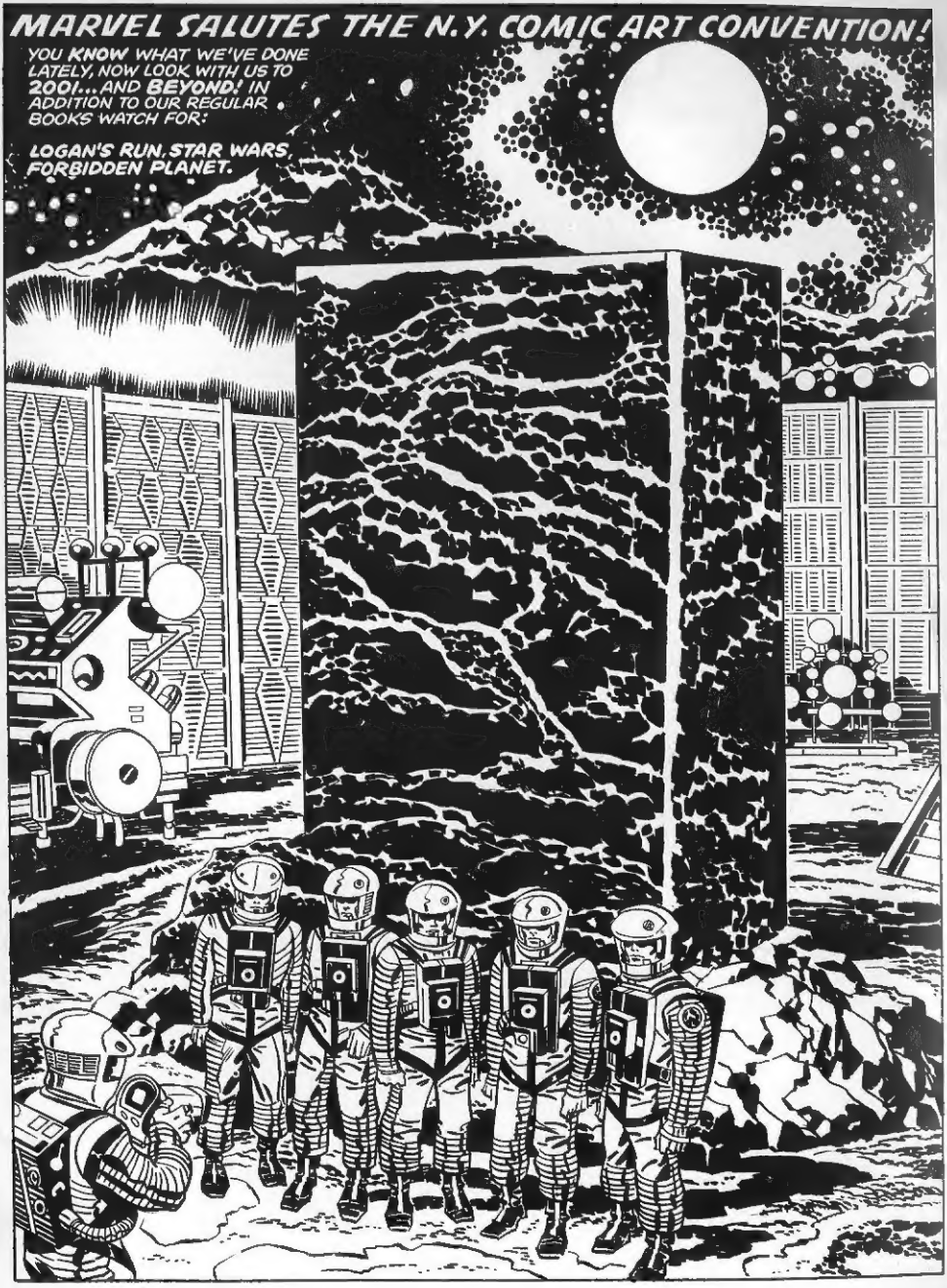
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GUEST OF HONOR... ARCHIE GOODWIN

Archie Goodwin began is full time career in comics when he gave up his job doing layout and design at **Redbook** to become editor and chief writer for James Warren's **Creepy** in 1964. Immediately, his gift for spinning short stories in the horror fantasy vein was apparent. Even more important, it was quickly evident that his abilities as an editor enabled him to attract an extraordinary staff that included many of the best artists ever to work in the comics--people like Alex Toth, Neal Adams, Russ Heath, Frank Frazetta and Gil Kane. This gathering was not a happenstance, a freak accident of artists' schedules; it is attributable directly to Archie's initiative and his ability to provide an atmosphere that allowed and encouraged these artists to do some of their finest work. Steve Ditko, in particular, created come of the most powerful comic art in his career when he illustrated a series of outstanding fantasy/black magic scripts written especially for him by Archie.

As Warren expanded his line with the new titles **Eerie** and **Blazing Combat** under Archie's editorship, more fine artists were added to the stable. Many were former artists of the great Entertaining Comics group of the 1950's, among them Wally Wood, Johnny Craig, Al Williamson, John Severin and Reed Crandall. This was hardly surprising since Archie Goodwin was one of the original EC fans in his youth, being a staff member of the fabled early EC fanzine **Hoohah.**

During the time he was editor at Warren, he was once asked, "What would you have said if someone had told you back when you were reading EC comics as a kid that you would someday be editing a comic book with all the EC artists?" Archie's response was immediate; "I would have said, 'Of course!'"

The EC comics certainly spurred Archie's desire for a career in art, but even as he was journeying from Tulsa, Oklahoma to New York City in 1956 to attend the School of Visual Arts, the EC line was in the process of dying.While attending school, he did sell one fantasy script to Harvey Comics, which was illustrated by Williamson and Crandall (though now published until years later). But by the time he graduated in 1959, the comics field was at its lowest ebb and certainly no place for a young artist to begin a career, and so Archie joined the staff at **Redbook.**

During that time, however, he kept one foot in the comics field by assisting Leonard Starr in writing "On Stage" in

1960 and 1961. In December 1964, he took over the writing of the strip "Secret Agent Corrigan," which is drawn by Al Williamson, and has continued this assignment through to the present.

Archie helmed the Warren comic magazines until 1967, when he stepped down as editor, through he has continued intermittantly ever since, most notably when he "revamped" the Vampirella series, creating the characters that still people the strip.

Discussion of Archie's time with Warren would not be complete without particular mention of the ill-fated **Blazing Combat**, which ran only four issues. Even though strongly influenced by Harvey Kurtzman's EC war comics (and, by the way, his **horror** work was **not** particularly influenced by Al Feldstein's EC horror comics), Archie's writing for **Blazing Combat** produced some exceptional very human stories about war that were of classic stature.

By the time Archie left Warren, the color comics field had fully recovered from its doldrums and was at the height of the second "golden age." Archie freelanced, writing King's **Flash Gordon** comic, and, for a longer stint, **Iron Man** at Marvel. It was at this point that he became the first person to write **The Fantastic Four** after Stan Lee left the feature. Other features Archie wrote for Marvel were **The Hulk** and **Luke Cage, Hero for Hire.**

In 1972, Archie accepted an offer from National to edit four books; **GI Combat, Star-Spangled War Stores, Our Fighting Forces** and **Detective.** Superimposing Archie's previous realistic approach to war on National's traditional highly romanticised continuing combat characters was a fascinating if sometimes odd experiment. Again, Archie's talents as an editor came to the fore as he allowed new artists and writers to do some outspoken and experiemental material in the short stories in the back of the books.

By far Archie's most memorable feature as National was "Manhunter," a character he and artist Walk Simonson created for the back of **Detective Comics.** Stories from this highly unusual and innovative series won Best Short Story awards from fellow professionals in The Academy of Comic Book Arts in 1973 and 1974, and a full length team-up of Manhunter and Batman won the Best Feature Length Story award in 1974. Archie Goodwin was also named Best Writer in 1973 and 1974 by the Academy.

Archie left National to return to Warren, but almost immediately moved again to joint the staff of the new Seaboard/ Atlas group, a switch that again proved transitory due to the demise of that company.

He then returned to Marvel to edit their black and white magazines. Since April of this year he has been editor-in-chief of Marvel's color comics, possibly the biggest and most demanding job in comics today. At this writing, no books under his editorship have appeared, but based on his top-flight record at Warren and National there is every reason to expect the very best from Marvel in the future.

From this brief summary of his career, it's evident that although Archie's schooling was in art, most of his career in comics has been spent writing. Yet there is no doubt that this very art schooling is what has made Archie such a successful writer for comics. Not only has it given him insights as to what makes a successful visually told comic story, it has also enabled him to break down his scripts into panel-by-panel thumbnail sketches as a guide to the artist for most of his scripts at Warren, and intermittantly since.

On rare occasions Archie has applied his writing and art talents simultaneously to create some delightful comic strips. His story "Sinner" in **Witzend** #1 was a classic, a stylized and satirical fable of the future. More recently he did a humorous and equally sardonic "Guide to Peepshows" in Flo Steinberg's **Big Apple Comics.** Based on these two strips, one only hopes that he can improve on his schedule of one strip every ten years.

--John Benson

Vaughn Bode

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The 1975 Comic Art Convention Awards Luncheon Interview with Jack Kirby and Walter Gibson

PHIL SEULING: I don't think anybody can doubt that in the fields of the comic book and the pulp, Jack Kirby and Maxwell Grant (I say Maxwell Grant: Walter Gibson) these are the two grand masters. What relationship does the adventure novel or the adventure comic book have to our lives? We live lives where we plug away for a living—I bet not one of us has caught a single criminal this week. What relationship is there in, let's say, the Shadow novel to our lives?

WALTER GIBSON: I can tell you what it was like forty years ago, or a little less. I tried to make all the Shadow stories informative, and I was surprised how well I did. For example, I used to see Harry Blackstone frequently with his magic show, and he had a new assistant, a young fellow in his twenties, and the fellow grabbed me immediately and wanted to know if they had fifty story buildings in New York, or whether that was just something fanciful that I put into *The Shadow.* I said, "Oh no, they're all there." And I said if there were any facts or statistics, well, they were all based on fact. Well, he liked that, and he couldn't wait to get to New York to see them. I used to try to play that in my plots. The fifty story building is very apropos. I'd start a scene in a big room up on the fiftieth floor, and there were these men around a big table, and they were pausing to look out the window because some ships were going down through The Narrows. And it happened that that was a steamship line that they owned, and they were talking about the ships like little toys, and at that moment somebody was getting ready to sink one of their ships.

In other words, I tried to keep the things in tempo with the times, and really make them informative, and I think that gripped the readers and carried them along with it. I know that the comics are a great field for that because there you can actually . . . the thing is realized in a visual way. (I did quite a few comics; I adapted the regular stories into the *Shadow* comics.)

I think that now the curious thing is that people are reading the stories for nostalgia. You pick up any of these *Shadows* that are coming out now, and you read about something happening on the Limited between New York and Savannah, why you'll find it's running exactly according to the timetable of 1936 or whenever the story was written. So maybe we're giving them information of a nostalgic type now.

There was one scene in *the Shadow* on the elevated. I used to ride the elevateds a lot, the old Third Avenue el, and they had expresses on that that went up a middle track, and whenever they would get to an express station—those were far apart—why that center track would climb so it went to a higher platform. There was no problem with it being a single track because the expresses came in in the morning and they went out in the evening. Well, in one story I had The Shadow corralled by some crooks on an elevated platform and it happened to be an express stop, and he raced up the steps to the express level above. Well, the single track had platforms on each side. Now you can visualize the width of a single track of a subway or elevated, probably about twelve feet wide, I'd say, at least. As they were

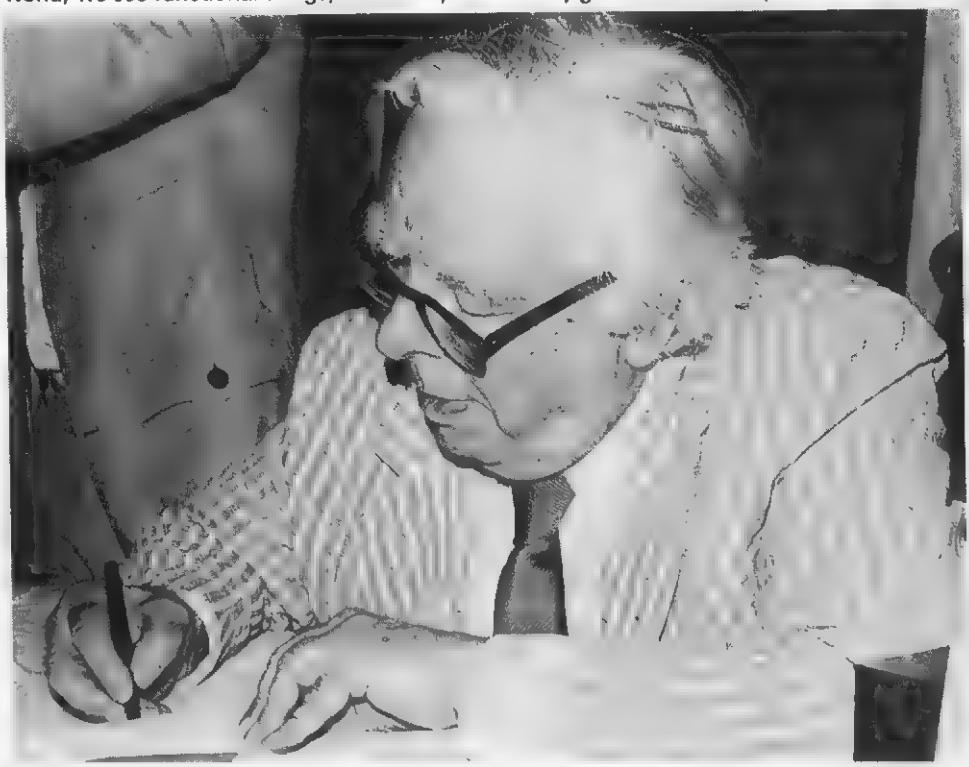
after The Shadow, an express was coming in, and he just took a flying leap right in front of the train and grazed it, and as he went by the front and landed on the other platform, the express came right through and blocked the pursuit. Well, I would use scenes like that.

I also had people going under the elevated who would disappear from a cab, because in those days you had open top cabs that would slide back. They called them sky views. And there were understructures on the elevated, and if you got up on one of those seats and shoved up, you could grab the elevated structure and haul yourself out. So many of the things that I put in the Shadow pulps, and I know people did the same in comics, either were descriptive or visually suited to what was going on at those times. I think that was a strong point of them.

SEULING: Jack, how about it? What meaning does the adventure comic book have for us?

Jack Kirby: Well, we live in a functional world, we see functional things, and reality is a practical part of our lives that of course is necessary, but I believe that we're kind of a non-static animal; we just can't remain static on any level. So we have to have something to offset this practical world and I believe that's why we live this vicarious life in various media; the movies, the dance, concerts, and, of course, comics, which I feel is a very valid part of our cultural media.

But what Walter Gibson says is true; I feel that we have to be contemporary at all times. If you look at an old comic book or at a pulp, why you'll find it's like a time machine. Whatever year it was published, you'll get a real glimpse of what people were like, how they dressed, the general atmosphere of the time. and the reason it causes nostalgia is that you can get a very accurate picture of what the time looked like through this medium. You'll see it in the cars, the buildings, and the people themselves. You'll see the sack dresses, I imagine, and you'll see the macho machines, the cars of the times, and you'll get a very good view of that period.



But aside from nostalgia, we have this craving for living more flamboyant lives, and comics supplies a lot of that. So if I've done an effective job in it, I feel that I've maybe contributed to an extra dimension that we all want and we all need.

SEULING: Like all literature, the pulps and the comic books broaden our experiences vicariously. Walter, about putting new and informative pieces in your books—the movies did that also. I think the reason that King Kong climbed the Empire State Building was that at that time the Empire State Building was a year old and it was the wonder of the world. And another thing that strikes me as I look at the pulps and the comic books (and now we're talking about the 1930's)—the big thing then wasn't lasers, the big thing then was radio. Remember how many times villains were striking other people with radio rays, and radio patrols would catch them, and radio directional signals would be the means to the solution. I don't think television ever entered into pulps or comics the way radio did. And now it's lasers.

KIRBY: Radio communication rings, the FBI rings, I think they were all part of the radio epic. Because we hadn't known anything else; we just conjectured about jets and things to come of that sort, but we couldn't visualize. And radio, I think, was the newest thing in our lives at the time.

SEULING: Both of your work is very much linked to reality. as you just told us, as far out as the adventures get, the more realistic the details should be. Do you think that's a necessity?

GIBSON: Yes, absolutely. Yes, you've got to keep the realistic details. Incidentally, you anticipated some things I did. I did one story called "The Black Hush" which was very much like the blackout of New York not so many years ago, only it was more localized. I made a list at one time of all the odd things that sort of came true out of the stories. There was a real good one when I was living up in Maine. I got an idea for a whodunit type of thing which was to follow a certain pattern. These stories fall into certain patterns, and you can get a new twist on some old one. There's a pattern where a group of people get on a boat or something where they can't get off, and they begin to get knocked off, and you wonder which is the killer.

SEULING: *Ten Little Indians.*

GIBSON: Yes, that was a story of that type. Well, I said I've got to get an unusual villain, and I really got a good one; I made the sheriff a villain. The sheriff who was out to solve the crime had a perfect situation because he just told everybody they couldn't leave the estate where this thing had happened. So there had had them. I picked a town about twenty miles from where I was as the perfect town for the crime, and I used to drive around and take layouts of the streets and visualize where the story was going to take place. Well, just at the time the story came out six months later, a deputy sheriff up there knocked off two people, packed them into an automobile, sent some kid off with the automobile and stopped in a parking lot down in Providence, and people noticed blood dripping from the rumble seat. And so far the sheriff was plotting just that way in that particular town.

SEULING: You're lucky Dr. Wertham didn't hear about that.

GIBSON: I don't know whether I sent out a mental flash that he picked up, or whether I was picking it up while I was driving around the town, but apparently it was going on at the time I was getting ready to write the story.

SEULING: Jack, have you had any ingredients in your stories come out truer than you expected them to?

KIRBY: Well if they did, I think that all of us would have a pretty hairy time. [Laughter.] I think my stories may be a little wilder and a little bit more far out. I enjoy that kind of thing, but I inject a lot of elements in those stories from things that are being worked on today—not things that have materialized. I feel that everything we have or see has already been done, and I'm not going to concentrate on what another man worked on. What I do is try to project our own environment a little beyond itself. I take the situations we have, and see what we can get out of them by

projection. and I come up with some wild ideas and I think they're entertaining in their own way.

I'll come up with androids, or machines and BEM aliens, and I'll do some bizarre thing like winding them in with *Romeo and Juliet*, with a classic. I have one story in mind; it might have been *Romeo and Juliet*, except that it had some bizarre trappings. I had this male android being designed and produced in one factory and a female android being designed and produced in another. And what the professors didn't realize was that these two androids were communicating together and falling in love by ESP, and when they wanted ot meet each other, why they broke out of the factories and they practically wrecked the city trying ot get to each other. And everybody was trying to stop them in the process. And of course they had good reason to, but the ways of love are kind of obscure and tragic, and, you know, *Romeo and Juliet* told that type of story perfectly. When the androids met and touched each other they blew up, because one was made of negative particles and the other was made of positive particles. So I had the *Romeo and Juliet* classic imbued in this bizarre story. That's my kind of thing and I know it's wild, but I have a good time at it. I only trust that people have a good time reading it. From the response I've got, it's always been so, so I stick with that particular kind of formula. There may be other formulas and if they're done well, you enjoy these too. And basically in comics you can use science fiction, you can use the classics, you can use sports; so the *device* isn't the thing, I think the *entertainment* is the thing.

JIM STERANKO: I think it's a real honor to have both of these gentlemen here who contributed an enormous amount of material to the pleasure of millions. Jack has spent his whole life doing comic books, and Walter has done . . . more than *The Shadow*, of course; he's written dozens of books on every conceivable subject. But I was wondering if the two of you are fulfilled—not that either one of you is through writing or drawing or creating; there's still a

lot of spectacular things ahead I'm sure—have you been fulfilled in the creations that you've worked on, that you've spent your life one? Are you pleased to be remembered, to see these people talk about your creations?

GIBSON: Oh, yes, I got plenty of fulfillment out of the *Shadow* period. The curious thing is I still don't know how I managed to turn out that stuff so fast. I just got ahead of it and each story seemed to overlap the other, so I actually got six months ahead of schedule, and I never had to worry about any pressure at all, except that I had to keep driving myself to do it even on days when I didn't feel too good. I remember one time up in Maine there was one real terrible day, and I was feeling miserable, I had a bad cold, and I said I was going to quit and take the day off, maybe take a couple of days off. This must have been about Tuesday, and if I could knock out the synopsis that I had in mind in the next few days I could mail it down so that Nanovic would get it on Friday and then I could get to work on it the next week.

So I went and picked up a *Saturday Evening Post*, and some writer, I think it was a woman, was getting plenty of money for a nice article, and she said that every now and then she would suddenly lose all inspiration and wouldn't write for six months. Well, my god, if I didn't write for six *weeks* I'd be out of business. And I threw the magazine down and went and knocked out the plot that day and the next and mailed it right down and got to work on it on Friday. You had to goad yourself in that business, but the thing was inspirational, the fact that one story would come through and the other would pick it up.

Now there's another thing about it too, and this is where the pulps differed from the comics. The pulp writers were always aiming to get a cover story. The same thing was true in other types of popular magazines. A writer would say, "Gee, I got a cover story last month." Well, *all* my stories were cover stories. That was terrific. I'd hardly done any fiction writing and all of a sudden there was The Shadow on the cover, and each new *Shadow*, there he was again. Well, that gave you a terrific lift. You felt like Ty Cobb; "I'm going to break my own average this year." I really think that had a great psychological effect. I think some of the other writers were beginning to get a little discouraged if they saw that no matter how well they were writing their stories, it was just another story in the magazine where it appeared. so I think there was inspiration from the thing itself. I wouldn't have wanted to give up those years—they were great. Later after I got through with them I said, "Gee, would I want to go through that pace again?" At my present age I wouldn't, but I think if I were back then I'd want to get right into it.

SEULING: Jack, let me throw a question your way. All the great producers of material we've ever had at the convention, among them Gardner Fox and Otto Binder, never . . . I guess they didn't have *time* to do any recordkeeping. Knowing it's an unanswerable question, I'll ask if you've ever estimated how many comics pages you've done in your lifetime.

KIRBY: It's not that it's unanswerable, but I'd rather not answer it because I feel that if I did find out the truth I'd suddenly feel very tired. [Laughter.] But frankly I've never given it any thought, because being in the comic field has been a natural thing for me. I was practically raised in it, and I just couldn't consider not being productive. There'd be something that I'd have to do in the comic field, and I've really done it on a lot of different levels. I've been a writer, and I've drawn, I've edited, and I've even published at one time. so it's been a field that I've thoroughly explored, and I've given my life to it. I feel that in a very natural way it's been a kind of a natural environment. I've stayed in it, I've studied it, and I respect it and I try to find ways of plumbing its potential, trying to find out where it's going.

As far as fulfillment goes, why I've made my peace in the practical world in a way by fulfilling myself in comics, just like any other man would in his job. so, speaking for myself, I feel that I'm fulfilled. But I don't think that really counts. Of course, it counts for yourself. I feel that there are by-

Joe Sinnot and Jack Kirby.

products, spin-offs, where you find people like Jim Steranko, who came into comics a little later than I did, but is no less enthusiastic. He wants to tell a good story, to draw and write well—and he has. There may be a few of the older fellows left who've had the experience, and convey it to the people who need it. I think that's a very important spin-off of the business, and I know that Jim is thoroughly immersed in the business and contributes to it greatly because he's a productive guy, but thankfully he doesn't have to take it in an agonizing way without guidelines like the fellows in the beginning did. And I feel that in that respect I've done something good, and a lot of the older fellows among my peer group have too, because they passed on something, perhaps their own form of storytelling.

SEULING: Let me just involve Jim and Jack in the same story. Roy Thomas once said—I don't know how true this story is and I have a feeling that the effect was more than the story was really worth—but he said that when Jim was doing *Captain America*, he turned back a story one Friday, "I can't finish it by deadline," when the book had to go out the following week. And they didn't know what to do, so they called up Jack and said, "Jack, can you do it?" And as Roy tells it, the story was so tough it even stumped Jack. He didn't get the whole story done until Monday [laughs]. Walter, just for the value of the anecdote, what's the fastest story you ever produced?

GIBSON: In the year I was doing the big batch of stories, getting ahead, there were two or three times I did a story in four days. The stories ran 200 pages and there were about 270 words to a page, so that would be about a 50,000 word story. The earlier ones were 60,000, but they let it down to 50 as they went along.

SEULING: So that's 12,500 words a day.

GIBSON: Yes. That was fifty pages. And I did that on about three different occasions. And the reason I did that, I'd come back from Street and Smith with a story all set and thinking of it on the train,

and I'd do it Monday-Tuesday- Wednesday-Thursday, because Street and Smith had a paycheck on Friday, and I would grab the train from Philadelphia to New York on Friday and pick up the check. I did that on a couple of occasions. But mostly I would lay out the story in blocks. I regarded forty pages a day as very heavy; that was 10,000 words. So that would have taken five days to do it; that was very heavy. These others were extremely rare. Generally I worked on a six to seven day schedule during that period. In later years when I was well ahead I still tried to do it within seven days at the most, but I took a little more time between. There were resting up periods in there.

But I could do four pages an hour steadily. And the reason I know that, and it was a very funny thing and it shows how introspective writers can get, was that some people were going out and wanted me to go along with them, and they had to go somewhere first and buy something and bring it back. And I said, "Why don't you go and do that, that'll take you about an hour and then I'll keep on that long." So they left and it seemed about five minutes later they were honking the horn at the door and I went out and said, "What're you honking for; go ahead and go there and come back." They said, "We *are* back." I said, "You couldn't have gone there." I thought they were kidding; I wouldn't believe it. I went back to straighten out the papers and there were four pages lying in the trough where I used to drop them, and so then I knew they had been gone an hour, because I was taking it by that time.

I went out to a group about a year ago called The Spiritul Frontiers Foundation, that goes into psychic subjects. And I've written on things like that so they invited me out. I tried to tie The Shadow in with it, and I began telling them stories just like that, how time seemed to pass from your mind and you lived in another world. I don't think there's any question about that. Lester Dent swore he actually saw some of his characters walking around one day when he quit. I never got that far, but I did get off into quite a limbo. Well, I started off this little talk at the lunch out there by saying, "Since, I've gotten out here people ask me where I live. Well, I live half way between New York and Chicago, because every time I got to New York, my wife takes me to the train and I get to New York in just two hours flat. Yesterday I was going to Chicago, so she took me to the airport and I got to Chicago in two hours flat. So I live half way between." Because I live in a world of time rather than space, and I've always been doing that for years. And if you begin to look at things that way, suddenly thinking in terms of time rather than actual space, you're going to see that maybe the people that are living in space are the ones that have got the distorted view of life.

STERANKO: I'm really amazed at the speed with which these men worked. I remember one time when I first started in the comic book business, I was sharing a cab with the late Eddie Herron, who was a terrific comic book writer who wrote a lot of things in collaboration with Jack. And Jack came up in the conversation as he usually does, and Eddie Herron remembered the time that Jack was turning out nine pages a day. Nine pages a day! I mean, the most for anybody else is maybe two or three pages tops in a day. And Jack is no slouch; he puts in a page's worth of work. And this was at the time when there were not five or six panels to a page, there were nine and ten panels to a page in the old Newsboy Legion, the *Boy Commandoes.* This was staggering for a guy like me, because I'm only able on my very best days to turn out two pages a day. Most of the time just one page is enough for me.

SEULING: And that's only the balloons.

STERANKO: No, that's only the panel borders. And I can't help thinking that part of being a genius, which both of these men are, has to do not only with the kind of material, because if you take your time and you take a year to turn out a single novel, you stand a good chance of turning out a kind of a masterpiece, but if you can do it on four or five days that puts you in a special category all by yourself, and both of these men are in that category.

By the way, before I give up the microphone, I want to straighten out that little 'story' you told a while ago. I didn't miss that deadline on that *Captain America* story. What happened was they were afraid I *would* miss the deadline and in order to circumvent that they asked Jack to do a story to drop in in place of mine, which he probably did during lunch. It was a magnificant story featuring almost every *Captain America* villain that there ever was. Now I did make my deadline on time, although it's no secret I am perennially late with my material. However, I've discovered a secret working at Marvel. If you give them a lot of time, they'll worry about your pages. They'll begin to noodle away at them. I remember I did a job in a book called *Our Love Story*, and it was the only love story I ever did, but I did it in a different way because it was a challenge. And I designed it for color, and if you've ever seen that story, you know it looks different. And yet it has a nice manner about it; it's kind of light and airy and romantic. I was trying to say something new about romance and comic books, rather than the old linear Jay Scott Pike kind of line, and if it was or wasn't a success, in any case it was different. When those pages got to Marvel in color, they looked at them and there were people that were colored yellow and purple and scarlet and blue, and they said, "This can't be, we've gotta change it; but it's gotta go to the engraver right now," so there was no time. And it took me a while to realize that if I wanted my pages to go through at Marvel the way

they were, complete with my own ideas for whatever they're worth, the idea was to get them in so late they couldn't *possibly* make any changes.

SEULING: When I read *The Shadow* or a Jack Kirby comic book, it's not the speed that they did it that astonishes me. I know the criteria for good writing; the consistency, the style, the pacing, the vocabulary, keeping a certain tone, all of those things are there. It's not the speed. These two men sitting here are marvels because of the *quality* of their work that is produced in such quantity. For the quality *and* the quantity, I'm amazed.

I'm going to read the plaques now. This says, "To Walter Gibson, for the wealth of high adventure material with which you have thrilled and pleased us for year after exciting year." [Applause.]

GIBSON: I want to say a word of appreciation. I think that was very well phrased and I like it very much.

SEULING: And Jack, this says, "To Jack Kirby, for causing us always to have the highest expectations of your work in the field of comic art, and for continually surpassing even such Olympian standards." [Applause.]

KIRBY: And of course that kind of thing is what puts a lot of grey hairs on my head, because I can't find myself doing a simple task, and I end up doing a fairly good complex story. So if I've kept you entertained, and I think I'm keeping myself entertained, I think I'm doing a good job and I thank you for giving me the opportunity. My appreciation of this knows no bounds. [Applause.]

STERANKO: Wouldn't it be fantastic if these two gentlemen collaborated on something? Walter Gibson and Jack Kirby doing a book together. It boggles the mind.

I would just like to comment on something that Jack said earlier about the debt I owe him and everybody who worked in comics since the very beginning, the pioneers, but especially in Jack's case, because I've received so much from him. I've learned; Jack Kirby is really my school. I never took an art lesson. What I did was I looked at kirby books; I looked at Bill Everett books; I looked at Wayne Boring books . . .

SEULING: And swiped.

STERANKO: And swiped, you'd better believe it, and how could you help yourself, because these were the guys who created the form, who just cut it out of sheer rock where nothing ever was. So you're right, Jack. They agonized in their own way in creating something where nothing was, and it's a real achievement. They've given it all to the rest of us who've come along who've read their books year after year. I must say that every line I ever made—those forms, those pictures and ideas, all pay tribute to Kirby and all of his peers, because they're all responsible for them. Not that it wasn't agonizing and painful a lot of the time, but they were the early pioneers and they should have that particular adulation.

Now, does anyone have a question for either one of these gentlemen?

QUESTION: This is to Jack Kirby. Who is your favorite inker?

KIRBY: My favorite inker is *any* competent man, any man who can do a good job on my stuff and ink it so the reader can appreciate it in some way, and satisfies my standards. It can be anybody you name, but if he's competent as far as I'm concerned and as far as the company's concerned, I'll say that he's my favorite.

QUESTION: After looking at that exhibit over in the parlor, I wonder, don't you ever get frustrated after doing one of those beautiful complicated pages and finding out that you can't get it printed?

KIRBY: No, because I have the satisfaction of looking at it myself and knowing that I've . . . I have a little bit of an ego, and I feel that it's self-satisfying when I've done something good. aand whether it's published or not, if you have it around and you look at it once in a while, why, I think that's a good moment. And I can tell you that I can use quite a few of those if I can get them. If you buy the drawing, of course, that's very gratifying too, and I know that some of that is spread around a little.

QUESTION: Are you going to do other

characters or go back to *Captain America* and *The Silver Surfer* and all that?

KIRBY: I'm working for Marvel now, and if I do any more characters, I'm quite sure they'll be Marvel characters. Marvel's got an army of good characters and there's plenty to choose from, and whoever they pick for me to do will contribute to an entertaining story I'm sure. I'm looking forward to doing a lot of good things because good things are so plentiful in that organization.

SEULING: I'm going to throw in a question fo my own here for Walter. Did Hollywood ever call?

GIBSON: No. they did put out a few *Shadow* movies, and they were contracted for by the movie people, but the thing was I was so busy with the work that I didn't want to get involved in that. I was doing perfectly happily with *The Shadow* itself. But I could have run after the movies, because Steve Fisher and Frank Gruber and several others did. But that was because they had slack periods. They'd get ahead on their pulp material and their market was filled for the time, so both of them landed pretty well.

I just want to mention one thing about this business of entertaining yourself when you do writing or comic work or whatever you do. Unless you like it yourself, the reader isn't going to like it. And I must tell a story along that line about Steve Fisher, who was a very competent writer who did mostly short stuff, although he did very well with that book of his, *I Wake Up Screaming*. It became a movie; he came and told me about that and I went over the plot with him when it was just in its formative stages. Well, one day I was in to see John Nanovic, and he's just taken over some manuscripts from another magazine at Street and Smith, and there was one of Steve Fisher's stories there. And Steve came in, and John said, "Oh Steve, I've got to talk to Walt for a few minutes. Why don't you read over this story that I've just inherited and tell me if there's anything about it you'd want to change or check." So Steve sat and read the story and he went into one complete trance. We were talking about our business; Steve was just reading it with his eyes glued to it, and all of a sudden he looked up and broke into our conversation when there was a little lull. He said, "Do you know what's wrong with this story? It isn't interesting." Now there's the guy that had written it and *sold* it, and maybe he thought John was going to bounce it back at him at that late date, but no, we just sat and laughed. We weren't asking him to criticze it, but for him to be so frank and say, "This story isn't interesting," when it was one of his great Steve Fisher stories . . . when you've got a writer like that you can't lick it, because he's honest with himself.

QUESTION: Are you happy with the new National *Shadow* series?

GIBSON: No, I would rather go back to what I did before. You see, I adapted the *Shadow* stories into comics, and I've just been looking over some of the old ones now. Now artwork and styles and everything have changed. Some of the earlier artwork was extremely good. It was done by Vernon Greene before he went in the Army; after he came out he later did *Bringing Up Father*. However, I think a lot of it could be changed, but I still think that the stories ought to follow the same flavor as the magazine. It just happened that it got off onto that particular tangent. I haven't any criticism against it itself, it was quite adequate. But I do like to synchronize the things and bring them closer together.

QUESTION: I'd like to ask Mr. Kirby, what do you think is the one strip you had the most fun doing?

KIRBY: Well, I'm afraid there *is* a strip that I did have a lot more fun doing. There was a thing called *Fighting American*, which was a satire on the super hero, and somehow I have a weakness for satire and I made the most of this thing, and I think I got a good laugh out of it, just doing it. Of course it was done in the fifties when comics were in trouble, and *Fighting American* petered out eventually. but I thought that it was a job I did well. I liked doing *Fighting American* because it was fun, literally.

Question: What was the greatest influence on your art style?

KIRBY: If you name any of the masters of the thirties; Caniff, Hal Foster, [N. C.] Wyeth, people like that, even Howard Pyle, a fine illustrator who did the Robin Hood series, I cannibalized them all. There was no such thing as formal training in my life. I think the fellows today should consider themselves fortunate, because they have so many good channels to good art training. My circumstances were rather limited, so I had to cannibalize all these men, take the best features of what they had, and inject all these elements into my own style, which I feel I developed fairly well. But you name any man who they considered good reading back in the thirties, and you'll find that some of his stuff is in mine.

SEULING: Jim and I sat around one time figuring out how many schools of art there were in the comic books, and we came up with four major schools, and, of course, one of the great sources was Jack Kirby, and under his name there were all kinds of people who owed debts to Jack Kirby. And it sounds funny to hear the question asked to one of the great *sources* of comic art, who *his* source was.

QUESTION: Mr. Gibson, I've heard that years ago you wrote an origin story for *The Shadow*, and I'd like to know if that particular story will ever be available in paperback or comic book form.

GIBSON: Well, I tell a lot about how The Shadow originated in the introduction to the Dover book, the one that's out now. Have you seen that? This Dover book is a facsimilie edition of *The Shadow*; it's on our display here. That tells you about the origin.

STERANKO: Walter, I think he's talking about the actual moment that Kent Allard became Lamont Cranston became The Shadow. That particular story has never been written. Except that bits and pieces of it appear in various books and you know, with a little luck maybe they'll all be forthcoming from Pyramid Books.

QUESTION: No, I'm referring to one definite story.

GIBSON: That's the one called "The Shadow Unmasks." I can tell you what happened with that very briefly. I had identified Lamont Cranston as The Shadow very early in the series. Of course the idea is to keep the reader always looking ahead to something else, so in another story it turned out that Cranston was not The Shadow. There was a real Lamont Cranston who went on these various trips and who was abroad so often that The Shadow merely took his place, and I think that story had a very good scene. I remember writing that and I think I did quite well with it. Lamont Cranston wakes up and sees himself standing at the foot of the bed, and the title of the chapter was "Lamont Cranston Talks to Himself." And by the time they got through with the discussion, Lamont Cranston figured he'd better go on a long trip because if either one of them was going to be declared an imposter, he would be the one. The Shadow, this imposter, knew more about Lamont Cranston, what his grand-uncle's dog's name was and everything else. And the imposter simply said that he had been masquerading as Cranston to knock down crime, and why didn't Cranston take another trip to Tibet or somewhere. So he did.

So that went along perfectly well for about, oh, six or seven years, and then we suddenly decided, let's give this a new twist. We had The Shadow entering The Cobalt Club as Lamont Cranston, when newsboys rushed up as they did in those days, screaming that there'd been an airplane accident at Wimbeldon and some Americans were injured. Fortunately nobody was killed, but the real Lamont Cranston had been in the crash and there was his picture right on the front page. Just then the Police Commissioner was coming out to say hello to The Shadow as Lamont Cranston, when Cranston suddenly disappeared, just got out of it very rapidly. Well, this was the time he had to go down to Mexico and come back as himself, as his real self. It turned out that he was a famous aviator named Kent Allard who had flown off to The Yucatan to visit some Mayan ruins and had never come back, and they had been searching for him for all these years. But actually he had landed

with an Indian tribe and then come back secretly, because he knew that nobody in the underworld would find out who he really was if he was supposed to be buried down in Yucatan. So he took off to Yucatan in this story and was immediately found there, and came back and had the pleasure of riding up Broadway in a tickertape parade with his friend the Commissioner. But his facial image as Allard was quite different from that of Cranston. So from that time on he had that real identity, but he only used it occasionally. He still played Cranston. That was the story, adn we'll come out with a reprint of it in due course I hope..

QUESTION: Could you tell us where The Shadow's funds came from? Was he using Cranston's funds, or what?

STERANKO: Master Charge. [Laughter.]

GIBSON: Well, curiously, we had that pretty well pegged when he started out as Lamont Cranston, because if he'd been Cranston, why Cranston had a lot of money. That was the purpose of making him a millionaire, so that he would have plenty of funds. But after he turned out not to be Cranston we were in something of a dilemma there, except that nobody really asked. I think we took it for granted that Allard had dug up Inca treasure or various other things at one time or another. we never did delve deeply into his source of funds.

STERANKO: In regard to origin stories, there's a divergence between pulps and comic books. Comics editors always feel compelled to make the first story an origin story and get it over with; you know, how the guy got his cape and mask and powers, which really gets in the way of telling a story as Jack will probably admit, because he's done more origin stories than any other man alive. But in the pulps they didn't seem to bother. They didn't go through the Bruce Wayne thing where he's sitting there and all of a sudden a bat flies in the window, and he says, "That's it—I'll call myself Windowman!" [Light laughter.] The first Shadow story is called "The Living Shadow," and The Shadow is really almost

a minor character throughout the book. He didn't have the form he did five years later when Walter began to develop the various aspects of his character, personality, and all the formula like the sanctums and all the rest of it. *But*, in many of the books Walter would drop in clues about The Shadow's background, about who he was, what he did. So it just all has to be amassed and put together. I guess you really have to read all 325 novels and you'll have the whole picture.

There's something that has been a subject of controversy since *The Shadow* has taken on this latest revival in the last year or so. In two of Walter's novels, he gave different explanations for The Shadow's ring, the girasol. He hinted that it came from the Aztec area that Kent Allard crashed in during that period; that it came from the eye of an idol. In another book, "The Romanoff Jewels," tied in with "The Red Menace," both of which are going to be reissued very shortly, Walter said that the girasol came from the Russian crown jewels. Consequently he's been subjected to a lack of credibility, that he made a mistake either one way or the other. Now Walter had done something very special. He called me up and told me recently that that was really a lot of nonsense, and he has an explanation for the discrepancy. When you hear it you'll be knocked out by it. It is so logical that I was stunned, and I said, "But yes, of course." Walter is going to tell that story later on this afternoon at a meeting of The Shadow Secret Society, so, if you want to hear it, please drop by.

QUESTION: Why was the inker on *Kamandi* changed from Royer to Berry?

KIRBY: Well, at that particular period, Royer took on some other job, and I found Bruce Berry, and found that he did a fine job, and it worked out well that way. Later on, Royer, having done his other work, came back and he did a lot of the war stuff for me at that period.

QUESTION: I'd like to ask Mr. Gibson about the *Shadow* radio program, and if he had anything to do with the writing of it or was in any way connected with the program.

GIBSON: Oh yes, I wanted to tell you that; that's a good story. Street and Smith, while I was first writing the *Shadow* stories, let Blue Coal or some other sponsor use The Shadow as an announcer, and we got tremendous protests from the readers. they had a voice; it was merely an announcer idea. And the readers of *The Shadow* said, "Why don't you have the real Shadow on the air," and so forth. So they told these people flatly that they could not have The Shadow unless they used our characters and took it directly from the magazine, because at that time all Street and Smith wanted to get out of it was plugs for the magazine. They thought that was worth letting the other people have the show. So these people capitulated, and, so help me, they said they would run it for one year so that Street and Smith, after they saw it wouldn't work out, would let them have The Shadow as an announcer again. So anyhow they went ahead with it, and instead of not going, it proved to be a sensation.

In the formative stages I was up in Maine in a town called Gray, ten miles inland. And they picked a very fine guy to do *The Shadow* on radio. His name was Edward Hale Bierstadt; he had written the *Warden Laws* program. Now you must remember that at this time there were practically no dramatic shows on the air, only a very few, and the *Warden Laws* program had been one of the best. He was on Chebeague Island in Casco Bay, and I drove over to meet him. They said, "Oh, one writer is there in Maine and so is the other writer they should get together." Well, we did, and I found that this man, who was older than myself and quite discriminating, had been reading *Shadow* magazines and he said he liked them. And he sat right down and he had an excellent script that he had drawn up. And I said it was fine, and I remember at the end he even had the announcement for next week; "And next week we will have 'The Serpents of Sheba.' " And I said, "That sounds pretty good, when're you going to do that?" And he said, "I just threw that in as a gag line." "Well," I said, "I'll write a Shadow novel

called 'The Serpents of Sheba' and then you can adapt it." "Oh, great." So that was how close we were getting.

So I went back on the boat—I had to hire a boat for fifteen dollars to get me back to the mainland on a special trip. And this fellow went down to New York. Well, immediately he ran into problems with the ad agency. That was one of the horrible things about writing radio in those days, and they wanted him to shape it around in their way, and so forth. They had ideas about stylizing it and he didn't go along with it. So after writing a couple of the first scripts, bang, he threw it up. Then they made the scripts very stylized. But we had won the major point which was the only thing that counted, and that was that The Shadow was in character and they had my characters in. The Shadow was Lamont Cranston, we had Police Commissioner Weston, we had Inspector Cardona, we had Schrevie the cab driver. Now, we didn't try to get some of The Shadow's agents in because there would have been a difficulty with the voice contrast. We had a few girls that would have been all right for it, but they said they would like to have one steady girl. You see, the radio had this limitation. It was only a half hour show, as opposed to a full length novel, but even worse, and I found this out when I got into radio myself later, you always had the limitation of the cast. They wanted to keep a few key actors, and the moment you spread out and got too many actors in a radio show it can get very confusing. So we agreed that we should keep the radio stories within one orbit, where Cranston was more or less a man about town and had a few confidants, and it was all right to have Margo Lane serve as his principal confidant, although I would have changed it.

Generally the women that figured in the novels were women that were in some difficulty, and The Shadow came to the rescue. Also, there was one reason why I liked to bring in new characters in every story, because you couldn't tell whether or not these characters were friend or foe, or whether they were going to be murdered, or whatnot. Every time you brought in a Shadow's agent you knew there was really no danger, and, of course, nothing could happen to Margo Lane. Well, that was regarded as good radio. But it wasn't good magazine stories. We had to keep ahead of the readers and have new jumps for them all the time. Later I put Margo into the stories judiciously. She wouldn't figure in every story. She would figure in certain ones if they were that type of whodunit stories.

So the radio, within its limitations, I thought was very well geared to the *Shadow* stories. And I could make the allowance for the limitations because the listeners wanted to come back to the same thing. I'll just close with one note. I'm constantly meeting people who talk about either the magazine as they read it many years ago, or the radio. I've yet to find any radio listener who can name a single story or episode or what it was about, with a few rare exceptions. People will say, "Oh, I liked the one with this," but they don't have a defined idea of it. Whereas the readers of the stories will come up and say, "Gee, I remembered such-and-such story." Those things tuck in their minds. Now, of course, maybe they read them several times. That could be, too. But it had different classes of audience to that extent.

SEULING: Well, there was the one where they were trying to burn a hole through him with a giant lens, and then there's the one where he's trapped in a giant lion's cage, and the police were after him and they knew they had him when they just opened the door to get the lion out or something like that and they heard the voice behind it, and then there's the . . .

STERANKO: That's enough!

GIBSON: Do you know what a spoonerism is? There was a man named Spooner who used to get his words twisted around. Well, I made up a beautiful spoonerism that covered *The Shadow*. The radio people were a little critical at one time of the stories. Somebody asked why they didn't take some of the stories from the

magazine very directly. And they said, well, the magazine stories had too much blood and thunder. Well, I said, yes, but the radio stories have too much thud and blunder.

QUESTION [Anthony Tollin]: I'd like to ask Walter if he knows how they came up with the idea in the radio program of clouding men's minds.

GIBSON: That was very simple. In the stories, I had The Shadow frequently filter from sight, or blend with darkness and everything of that sort. I put quite a lot of hypnotic stuff in too because he'd been in Tibet, and hypnotism and magical illusions were my specialties. But I didn't overplay them. Well, they liked the idea of The Shadow begin invisible. As a matter of fact, that very first script that Bierstadt did we were having a problem—The Shadow was to talk to a man in the death row at Sing Sing. We decided we would have the guards hypnotized and he moved in in a dim light, and the man heard a voice talking. Bierstadt did a very good job of delineating that. Well, these people just decided to take the short way, which was very good radio, to simply say that he clouded people's minds. They'd say, "Shadow, where are you?" "I'm here but you can't see me." Well, that was wonderful because the people listening over the radio couldn't see him either. And don't forget we had a juvenile audience. It was very good formula. So really the radio was very similar to the stories where I had him use real hypnotism on people, except that mine was modified, whereas they made it a standardized thing.

SEULING: I know you'll all join me in saying thank you to Jack Kirby and Walter Gibson [Applause.]

Transcribed and edited for publication by John Benson.
Photos by Samuel Maronie.

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THE FIELD OF SELLING OLD COMIC BOOKS IS IN ITS INFANCY

By Nick Pappas

Last year I was walking through the larger than usual crowds at the Comic Art Convention, stopping here and there to make an arrangement with another comics dealer, or buying some speculative issues now and then, when a young boy, (ten or twelve?) asked me a question.

"How much do you want for that **Conan** 1? You're selling it, aren't you?

"Not really," I said, "but it would be too much for you, anyway. I'm a comic book dealer and I bought this to re-sell it later on."

"Come on, man, how much?" he insisted. "That's what I want it for. I'm a dealer, too!"

And why not? How long ago had I become a (very) young capitalist? Apparently, age has nothing to do with the decision to earn a profit from the buying-trading-selling of comic books. As I thought it out, it even came to seem quite natural for someone to rely on his experience and expert knowledge in order to make a living. Combining your expertise with your need to support yourself is simply combining business with pleasure, and there's nothing odd about that idea. We take it for granted that carpenters and designers and artists enjoy their occupations as well as use them to support themselves. What dreary lives must people lead who spend their work-week at something they feel no affection for and no involvement in! Then it must be true that the one who knows comic books would be happiest involved with comic books for his bread and butter. And one step further: It's to be expected that these involved and sincere experts would be young, since the comics are primarily a medium **for** the young.

Let's follow some of the more common paths by which the comic book reader-collector metamorphoses into a comic-book dealer. They won't be hard to follow since many have blazed the ways before us.

1.**NEW LAMPS FOR OLD!** The most common experience is for the collector to finance his new prizes by selling off duplicates (or unwanted copies) of the old. A whole run of **Swamp Thing** might go to acquire a vintage Kirby **Boy Commandos.** The success at translating books to cash to books again can become an acquired taste. And if it can be done on a small scale, why not on a larger one?

2. **ME AND ROCKEFELLER** The born business men simply look at cash exchanging hands and decide then and there that making money is their **real** hobby. Maybe they lent money to older brothers and sisters when they were five (at reasonable interest, naturally). When they find out someone is willing to play cash for comic books, their life-style is established.

3. **HALLELUJAH! I'M A BUM!** The dedicated goof-off works on a different logic. All he wants to do is read comic books all his life. But with the craftiness of all bums and loafers, he recognizes a way to avoid working and to be praised for his idleness at the same time. And so we find his mother not only caring for the food, clothing, and shelter of an entire family, but also pulling wagonloads of comic book boxes up a flight of steps at each convention; and his father not only putting in a tough work-week plus travel plus overtime plus ulcers for $250.00 a week, but also spending weekends putting comic books in plastic bags and chauffering the little rascal from home to convention and back. And as icing on his amazing cake, **they** boast about **him** (who goes on reading comic books) because he's only 19 and already makes $175.00 a year!

4. **ME AND AL CAPONE!** Crime is romantic and exciting and fun! From watching TV and reading comics, our next young fan comes to this conclusion and decides he'd rather make $10.00 illegally once a month than $150.00 a week straight. He usually starts with artwork (lots of it! and some stolen, before it was printed!) and graduates to stealing from one dealer's table and selling loot to another dealer across the room! There's one thing almost every thief has in common, oddly enough. Have you ever noticed how physically **dirty** they are? That's probably because baths are legal.

5. **WALL ST. TO YANCY ST.** More and more in recent years, the field of comic book dealers has been infested with investors. These poor sad folks who have been murdered on Wall Street because they didn't know what they were doing are convinced that they can cash in on this new field. And they become **more** convinced when they see so many young folks operating successfully. They usually last about three years, by which time they have been murdered just as before, and for the same reason-they don't know Sheena from Millie or Conan from Conan Doyle! They probably sell out at last to an up-and-coming nine-year-old who needs more merchandise for the third comic book store he is about to open!

And that's the roll call of new and young comic book dealers. Since I'm in my twenties I can see clearly now and with sharp perspective that the young capitalist may be successful, and may even be laying the foundation for a lifetime career. But one thing he isn't, and that's imaginative! He hasn't got the creative ingenuity, the spark of inspriation to find a new and meaningful approach to entering the field of selling old comic books!

Me? I sold my brother's collection when he forgot to lock it up one day.

Photos From The 1975 New York Comic Art Convention

Berni Wrightson, Howard Chaykin, Jim Starlin

Len Wein, Swamp Thing, Berni Wrightson

Sol Harrison

Steve Engelhart

Neal Adams

Don McGregor

Barry Smith

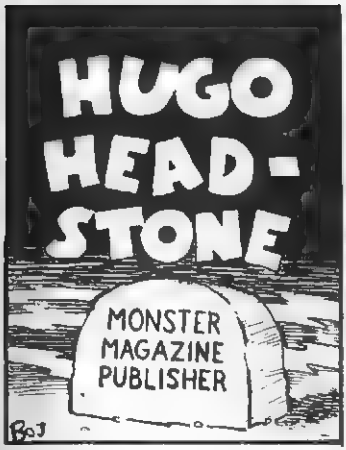
Bill Gaines

Larry Hama

Gil Kane

Mike Kaluta

Dave Cockrum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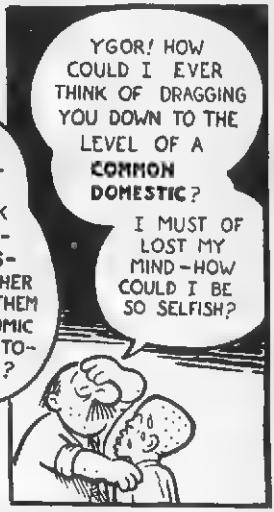
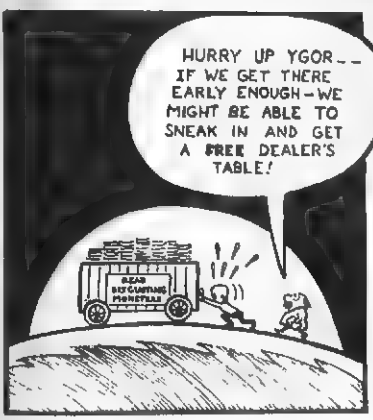
DISGUSTING MONSTERS IS IN DIRE FINANCIAL STRAITS! WE NEED MONEY DESPERATELY TO GET THE NEXT ISSUE ON THE STANDS!
I'LL JUST HAVE TO MAKE THE SUPREME SACRIFICE _ _!

YGOR – TAKE AN AD IN THE CLASSIFIED IN THE LOCAL PAPER UNDER DOMESTIC SITUATIONS – "ATTENTION _ _ OUR PROFESSIONALLY TRAINED HOUSEBOY LOVES TO CLEAN FILTHY APARTMENTS – REASONABLE RATES _ _ CONTACT DISGUSTING MON _ _"
COPYBOY

NO! NO! BOSS! ANYTHING BUT THAT!
I'VE GOT A BETTER IDEA – WHY NOT GET ALL YOUR BACK ISSUES OF DISGUSTING MONSTERS TOGETHER AND SELL THEM AT THE COMIC ART CON TOMORROW?
COPY BOY


YGOR! HOW COULD I EVER THINK OF DRAGGING YOU DOWN TO THE LEVEL OF A COMMON DOMESTIC?
I MUST OF LOST MY MIND – HOW COULD I BE SO SELFISH?


HURRY UP YGOR _ _ IF WE GET THERE EARLY ENOUGH – WE MIGHT BE ABLE TO SNEAK IN AND GET A FREE DEALER'S TABLE!

COMIC ART
NO FREE TABLES ALLOWED DEADBEAT!
POW!

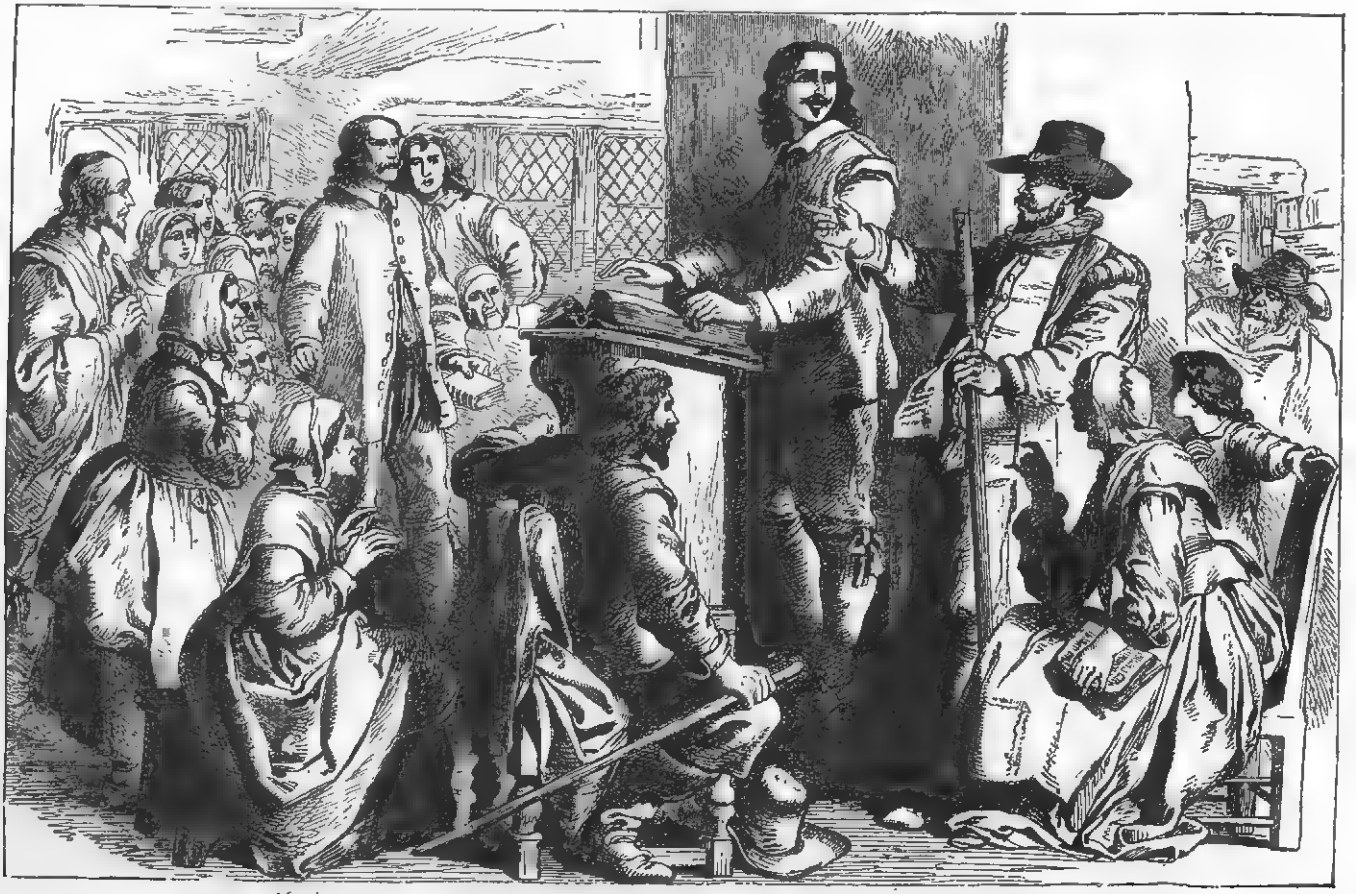
_ _ NOW AS I WAS SAYING – "OUR TRAINED PROFESSIONAL HOUSEBOYS LOVE CLEANING FILTHY APARTMENTS – REASONABLE RATES – CONTACT DISGUSTING MONST _ _'

Scenes From Past New York Comic Art Conventions

We are trying to speed up registration. Thank you for being patient!

"Are you certain you registered in advance?"

I've told you ten times, already! I'm **not** Neal Adams, and I **won't** draw you a Mickey Mouse!



If that is an **authentic Action 1**, I raise the bid by fifty cents!

Come on! Come on! We saw you take it off our table!

If you make one more phony bid, Clarence, you'll be taken out of this auction on a stretcher!

The audience listened to the panel on **How Comic Books are Stapled** with deep interest and lively enjoyment

The panel on **Women in the Comic Book Industry.**

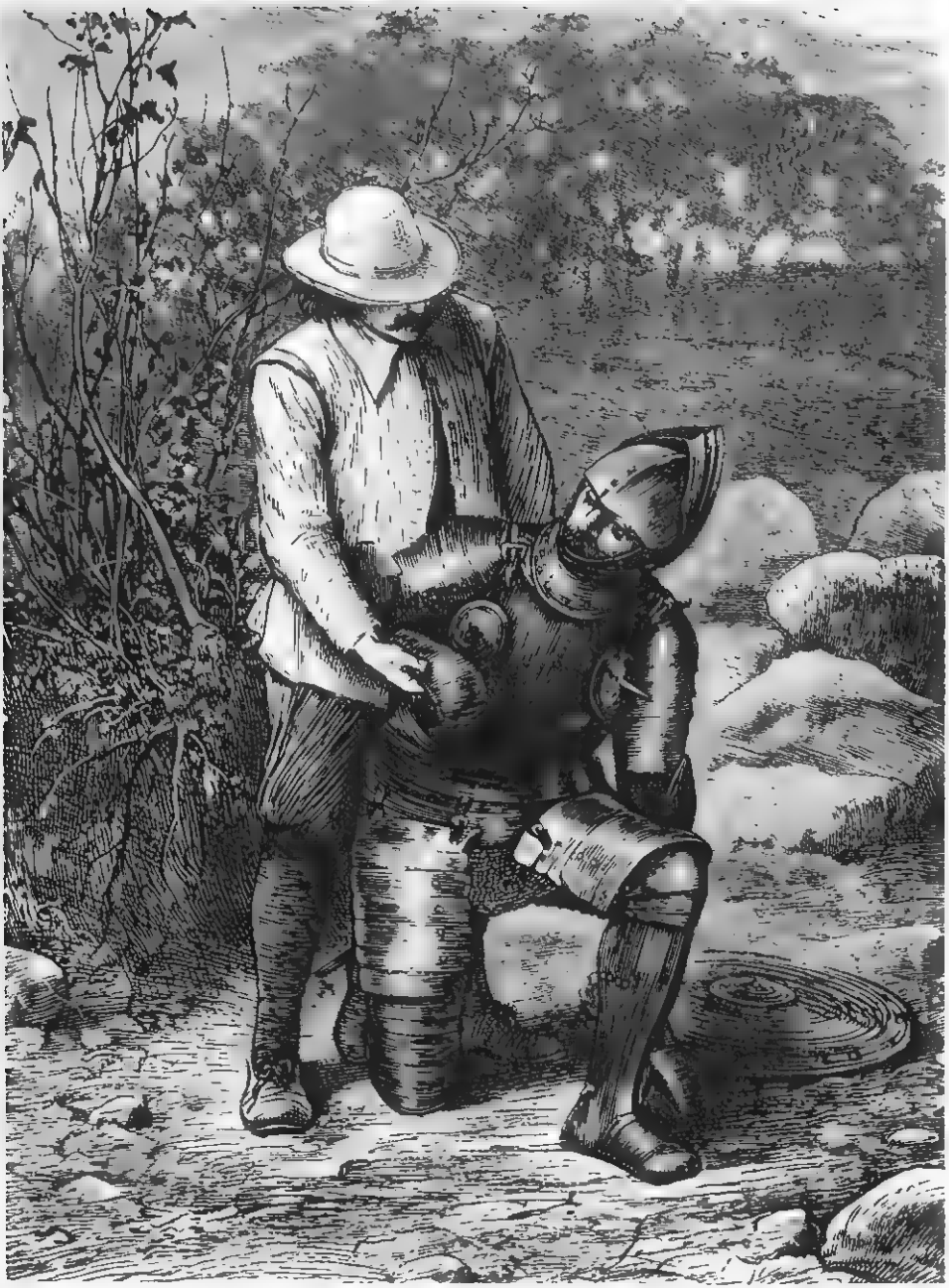
Our Night Security Staff.

If I wear it under my jacket, they won't see that it's yesterday's admission ticket.

But if you're spending so much on comic books, I figured I could spend the same in Macy's!

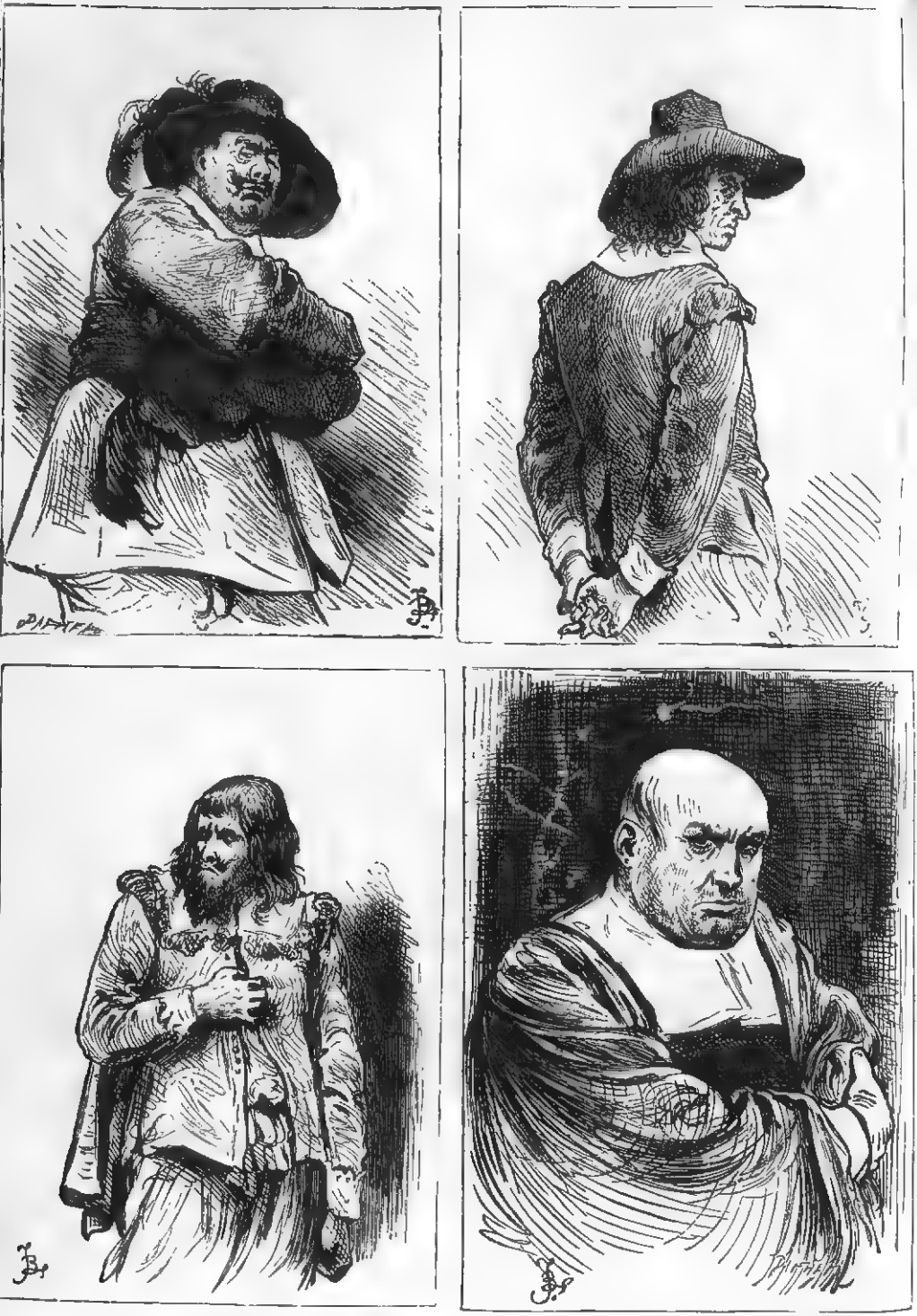
"Yes, I am here to welcome our guest artists! And you must be Sergio Aragones and Gray Morrow!"

The cocktail party for artists and writers.



Your Shining Knight costume is terrific, but how are you going to get up the steps to the stage?

If you think **my** costume is something to see, wait till you see Angelique's!!



People who run other conventions drop by to see how things are going.

Doesn't anyone buy big little books anymore?

"Please, Mother! Seven thousands dollars is really not too much for Spiderman No. 2. We will earn back the mortgage money in no time!"

No sense wasting another admission. I'll wait for my son out here. How long could it take?

A VERY ABBREVIATED REPORT ON THE AIR PIRATES VS. WALT DISNEY

Not so very recently, a number of underground comic books appeared which tickled the public's fancy by their spoofing of one of America's longest-lived traditions - **Walt Disney and the Disney Style!** Mice and pigs and other wee creatures, looking their cutie-pie best, disported themselves lustily and comically in very familiar-appearing stories portrayed in extremely familiar graphics! The Disney organization felt they had to "protect" their mouse [and his friends] from this deviation in the American cultural tradition. They [the Disneys] sued.

The object of their lawsuit was a group of young, sharpwitted, talented people who believed that parody and satire were legitimate forms of expression. To gird their financial loins for the California courts, these intrepid heroes of freedom of expression journeyed to New York City. Here, at the 1975 Comic Art Convention, they spoke to audiences, shook innumerable well-wishing hands, and, more importantly, sold their drawings to supportive and appreciative fans. They **earned** those dollars—to return to the West Coast for the legal [and moral] battle.

They lost.

They never even got into the ring. Their lawyers had not appeared on a court date, and quickly the Disney people were granted summary judgement, and awarded what they had sued for—a quarter of a million dollars.

And thus continues our story. The Air Pirates [the undergrounders] decided to appeal. "We'll get them in the next round" they vowed.

At this Convention you'll see the Air Pirates themselves, Dan O'Neill, Shari Flennikan, Bobby London, and Gary Halgren. Again they'll be explaining, drawing, asking for help. Again they will go to court against the Disney folks.

This time, maybe the decision will be different.

WITH NEW PEELED EYES AND A SENSE OF WONDER

At every big comic convention, no matter which one, you will always be able to find at least one old time comic fan complaining that there is no more originality left to conventions. To this Old-timer it seems that all of today's conventions are just copies of each other, and that they provide no more real inventiveness or imagination.

Is he right? Could it possibly be that comic conventions are slowly dying out? Or could the fault possibly lie with the Old-timer himself who is just tiring of the annual fan gatherings?

There have been at least two reasons for holding conventions. The first one was to get a chance to meet the professionals, and the second was to have an opportunity to enhance or complete a comic book collection by walking through the dealer's room.

Is it possible that the old time fan has forgotten his first thrill at walking through the dealer's room or actually getting an autographed drawing of him by Marie Severin?

Put yourself in the position of a comic book fan today, entering the dealer's room at a convention for his very first time. At first, his eyes widen as they get their first glimpse of row upon row of tables featuring comics dating back as far as the Golden Age of Comics itself. Where else would he get the chance to see an actual copy of **Detective** No. 27 or **Fantastic Four** No. 1?

As the fan continues to explore the large room, he begins to discover other merchandise besides the comics he has come to love. In one corner of the room is a dealer selling stills from some of his favorite movies. In another corner a dealer is selling models and toys incorporating the images and names of some of the best loved super heroes. Before he knows it, our poor (!) comic book fan has laid out of more money than his conscience (or desire for more material) would like to admit.

Certainly comic book conventions aren't dead or tiresome for this fan!

But back to the original problem and a **third** reason for holding conventions. Most old time comic book fans have been coming to these conventions for three, or five, or ten years and have come to meet people who have turned out to be long lasting friends. They have been coming to these annual gatherings not only to fill up their collections or to meet the professionals, but to meet people who share their avid interest in comics. In many cases, the only chance some fans get to see each other is at one of the various conventions held yearly.

Can it be that the old time comic book fan has forgotten this? Becoming tired of the Convention scene is like tiring of his friends and the comics that have been meaningful to him over the years.

The answer is obvious. Any comic book fan, not just the Old-timer, who finds himself not having a good time at a convention should not be there. Fandom is what a person makes of it, and if that person finds that he no longer enjoys attending conventions or even reading fanzines, he should **not** blame the Convention or the people who love it and thrive on it. The blame lies with this alienated fan alone and it is clear that he should either forget about his fan activities or start to relax some more and rekindle his convention enthusiasm.

Every year, new comic book fans will come to the conventions and discover the fantastic events and happenings that go on at gatherings such as this year's 1976 New York Comic Art Convention. If the old-timer can remember his first excitement and learn to see again with that early sense of wonder, with his "eyes new-peeled", he even for the hundredth time can find the very same enjoyment he found at the first comic book convention he ever attended.

Jim Burns

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